

New York State Mass Gathering Planning Guide

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NYSEMA
*New York State Emergency
Management Association*



**State
Police**



**Homeland Security
and Emergency Services**

OVERVIEW

Mass gatherings of all types are held across New York State on a regular basis and include a wide variety of events. There are various definitions of mass gathering events, but for the purpose of this guide mass gatherings are considered a temporary indoor or outdoor gathering of persons that could have a potential adverse impact on public safety due to man-made threats or natural hazards. The size and scope of mass gathering events vary greatly, ranging from small local festivals with a few hundred people to large-scale sporting events or concerts with several thousand attendees.

Depending on the size of the host jurisdiction, the resources available to support the planning and operations of these events can vary greatly as well. Additionally, mass gathering events have become increasingly challenging to manage from an emergency preparedness and security perspective. Unpredictable weather, intentional acts of violence, and a variety of technological/accidental hazards can present unique challenges to mass gathering event managers. As such, this Mass Gathering Planning Guide is designed to provide a streamlined, high-level list of planning and operational considerations to those planning for and managing mass gathering events.

Potential Threats and Hazards: While any incident can create unique concerns to a mass gathering event management team, recent history has shown highly significant impacts from the following threats and hazards:

- Active Shooter and/or Terrorist Attack (e.g., improvised explosive devices, ramming attacks)
- Tornado or Severe Wind Storm
- Flash Flooding, Lighting
- Fire
- Civil Unrest
- Mass Illness or Exposure



Fire at food vendor station during 2017 Erie County Fair

Purpose and Scope: The purpose of this guide is to offer a variety of preparedness and security options to consider when planning for a mass gathering event. **It is intended as a framework to help inform planning and operational decisions, and not as a step by step list of instructions.** It is designed as a resource both for helping to plan new events and a guide to consider for reoccurring events, as it includes best practices and other considerations based on lessons learned from prior experience and the evolving threat environment.

The guide includes several options to consider, but it is ultimately up to the team responsible for planning and managing the event to determine which options are most viable based on the threat environment, available resources, previous experience, and other factors. Additionally, depending on the nature of the event (e.g., professional sporting events), the private sector may play a lead role in helping to plan and finance the operations. However, given the potential public safety implications, local first responder and public safety agencies need to be involved in mass gathering planning as well. Accordingly, this guide is also designed to help ensure collaboration between emergency management, law enforcement, and other stakeholders involved in planning for mass gathering events. In terms of stakeholders, planners should also consider engaging local public health departments, hospitals, nonprofit partners, and others that may have an operational role should there be some type of incident or emergency.

Note too that event managers should coordinate with local building/fire code officials to ensure compliance with building and fire codes and associated requirements. For example, in accordance International Fire Code (§403.12.2), local building/fire code officials may require a public safety plan if they consider the event to have an adverse impact on public safety services. If these officials are part of the initial conversation, the plan can be developed with all partners involved in the discussion. New York State regulations may need to be adhered to as well. Part 18 of the NYS Sanitation Code sets requirements that public functions expecting to attract more than 5,000 people must comply with. Finally, use of the Incident Command System (ICS), to include the development of Incident Action Plans (IAPs), is also a best practice and strongly encouraged. Use of ICS and IAPs will help to define roles and responsibilities and improve the planning process. Local emergency managers are a resource to assist with ICS and IAPs and should always be a part of the planning effort.

Guide Structure: The guide is organized into three sections: Pre-Event Planning, Operational Considerations During the Event, and Post-Event Review/After Action Planning. There are also Appendices with additional information about the various rules and regulations associated with mass gathering planning, and links to other useful resources. The document was developed collaboratively by the New York State Emergency Management Association, New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, and the New York State Police.

Note: This guide will be reviewed and updated annually (if necessary) based on feedback, lessons learned, and other factors. Feedback, comments, or questions can be directed to: terry.hastings@dhses.ny.gov.

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PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Identify and Coordinate with Key Planning Partners:

- ❑ Create a core planning team or steering committee to oversee major decision-making and planning. Consider the use of sub-groups if necessary to focus on specific planning issues.
- ❑ Identify key partners (i.e., federal, state, local, private sector, nonprofit) that can contribute to the planning process and provide value to the event management and security to the venue.
- ❑ Ensure coordination with local building/fire code officials, as they too may have public safety planning requirements.
- ❑ Inform and involve community partners in the planning/coordination process (e.g., community organizations, businesses/residents near the venue).
- ❑ Obtain contact information for all key partners, including event security; ensure that cell phone information is available, as office numbers are likely not useful during the event.
- ❑ Engage event promoters or sponsors directly and ensure they are involved in all phases of planning.
- ❑ Map out the decision-making chain of command for varying incidents (e.g., what triggers will cancel/postpone a performance? Shut rides down? Where will people be evacuated to? Who manages an evacuation and how is that information transmitted to officials and the public?)
- ❑ Identify a process or partner to monitor the weather and other potential hazards.
- ❑ Ensure that relationships are in place with law enforcement to facilitate intelligence and information sharing.
- ❑ Remind event planners and local response agencies that they can reach out to county and state partners for support and technical assistance.
- ❑ Keep planning meetings notes and ensure formal documentation of all relevant plans, policies, and procedures.

Risk Assessment:

- ❑ Develop a documented list of potential threats/hazards (natural, man-made, technological/accidental) based on historical precedence or credible intelligence.
- ❑ Identify potential vulnerabilities associated with the threat profile.
- ❑ Consider factors that will present unique risks within the event (e.g., concert, celebrity/notable figure attendance, protests, etc.).
- ❑ Conduct fire/code inspections in advance of the event to identify and mitigate potential fire hazards.
- ❑ Consider cascading events that could impact the event (internal and external).
- ❑ Engage law enforcement and/or legal counsel to ensure an understanding of any relevant legal/constitutional issues (e.g., first amendment rights) and how arrests, prosecution would be handled for different incidents.

- ❑ Determine in advance what, if any, types of items will be prohibited from being brought into the event or venue; ensure appropriate security screening processes and equipment will be in place.
- ❑ Conduct a thorough survey of the event grounds, routes, facilities for potential vulnerabilities; consider pre-screening venue before opening (ex: explosives detection canine sweep) and in advance of high-profile events (e.g., concerts, dignitary visits, etc.)
- ❑ Identify potential personnel risks and appropriately vet employees and/or event volunteers prior to the event.
- ❑ Identify any concurrent events in nearby locations that could impact resource and personnel support to the event.
- ❑ Utilize geographic information systems (GIS) to review and display layers of data and information related to event locations. Identify potential impacts, and special relationships between the hazards. Identify soft-spots and vulnerabilities in protective strategies; physically visit these areas.
- ❑ Ensure an understanding of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), a.k.a. drone, regulations and potential restrictions and consider the need to limit drone take off/landing at or near the venue (see Appendix B).

Implement Critical Infrastructure Protection and Other Mitigation Measures

- ❑ Implement infrastructure protection measures to grounds, routes, facilities, etc. based on identified vulnerabilities. Consider the use of large vehicles, bollards, and/or other mechanisms to limit or block access to key locations (if necessary based on risk assessment).
- ❑ Remove potential infrastructure, personnel (and other) risks and risk enhancers.
- ❑ Explore mitigation measures beyond the event grounds, routes, facilities, etc. Ensure all city/county/state personnel are aware of changes/updates.
- ❑ Develop and test continuity of operations plans.
- ❑ Identify a list of critical infrastructure that could be impacted by an incident during the event.

Identify Personnel and Equipment

- ❑ Identify any personnel and equipment gaps and consider mutual aid or other processes to optimize response times and mitigation/deterrence of threats/hazards.
- ❑ Determine if there will be a need for any contractors, vendors or commercial vehicles/equipment.
- ❑ Test/evaluate pre-staged equipment to ensure it is working effectively and efficiently.
- ❑ Identify back up equipment and rotation of personnel, particularly for long duration events and for extreme weather conditions (e.g., multi-day festival with high temperatures).
- ❑ Pre-identify locations that could be utilized as resource and personnel staging areas, if required.
- ❑ Pre-stage equipment and other resources, as necessary.
- ❑ Ensure personnel will have access to water, food and other resources (e.g., wearing weather-appropriate gear) to function at optimal levels.

- ❑ Determine the need for any type of credentialing for event staff (note: credentialing could be as simple as issued t-shirts at a smaller event or as complex as readable ID cards for larger events).

Pre-Event Trainings and Exercises and Protocol Reviews

- ❑ Conduct pre-event exercises (e.g., tabletop, functional, full scale) that assess capabilities and further identify risks and requirements.
- ❑ Ensure personnel are certified in incident management trainings that best suit your event (e.g., crowd management, ICS, etc.).
- ❑ Review basic protocols with event staff to ensure familiarity with relevant plans.
- ❑ Evaluate where critical skills and equipment can be best utilized.
- ❑ Train staff and volunteers in suspicious activity reporting (e.g., See Something, Say Something).

Communications and Information Management Protocols

- ❑ Thoroughly evaluate communication procedures and equipment; ensure communication interoperability between and across disciplines.
- ❑ Ensure several layers of redundant communication lines and test against varying risks (natural, man-made, technological/accidental).
- ❑ Coordinate with telecom providers for their communications expertise and potential need for unique resources (e.g., Communication on Wheels) depending on the event scope.
- ❑ Determine alerting and communication resources, processes, and protocols. Consider structured groupings based on primary stakeholders, such as internal, external, public and patrons.
- ❑ Develop pre-scripted messages for the public to be used via PA, radio, mobile apps and social media (for pre-scripted messages consider: seek shelter and evacuate and for communications, generally, use plain language).
- ❑ Determine a process for sharing information regarding missing persons, including procedures for who is notified and what actions will be taken.

Permits and Notification

- ❑ Throughout the pre-planning process, obtain proper permits to effectively run management, security operations.
- ❑ Ensure compliance with state and local regulations concerning mass gathering event management (see Appendix A).
- ❑ Identify appropriate levels of surge staff and equipment to respond to varying risks.
- ❑ Ensure state partners (e.g., NYS DHSES-OEM) are made aware of any large-scale events that could be supported.
- ❑ Review local codes/regulations pertaining to any unique aspects of the event (e.g. pyrotechnics/fireworks) and ensure compliance with fire/building code requirements.

Mass Casualty Plan Review

- ☐ Review your jurisdictions mass casualty and/or mass fatality plans with all relevant personnel and adjust based on the scope of the event.
- ☐ Ensure plans are scalable to contend with potentially numerous casualties and fatalities.
- ☐ Ensure locations have been identified to potentially transport or relocate casualty victims.
- ☐ Identify in advance potential Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) resources and protocols.
- ☐ Pre-identify family assistance and family reunification locations.
- ☐ Identify in advance a process to know how many patrons are at the event at any given time.
- ☐ Review NFPA 3000 (see Appendix B) and leverage items within to assist with mass casualty planning.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Maintain Situational Awareness

- ☐ Establish Incident (Event) Command Post operations and ensure connectivity to emergency operations centers.
- ☐ Conduct final run through of operational procedures and preparedness measures at the beginning of the event.
- ☐ Schedule appropriate number of briefings throughout the event to maintain situational awareness.
- ☐ Provide beginning of shift Just-In-Time training for all volunteers, staff and vendors (where possible) on roles and responsibilities during an emergency incident.
- ☐ Monitor weather and other potential hazards.
- ☐ Ensure mechanisms to maintain law enforcement related information and intelligence as necessary (e.g., liaison officer).
- ☐ Leverage available Geographic Information Systems (GIS) resources to develop maps/materials and use mapping/location terminology to discuss event operations (e.g., quadrants, zones).
- ☐ Monitor social media platforms for situational awareness.
- ☐ Maintain the ability to know how many patrons are at the event at any given time.

Maintain Incident (Event) Action Plans (IAPs)

- ☐ Consistently document event procedures, incidents, etc. in a pre-determined IAP format.
- ☐ Conduct IAP briefings at the beginning of each operational period.
- ☐ Ensure the Incident Commander(s) collaborates with partners and agency administrators to develop common IAP objectives and operational priorities.
- ☐ Leverage NY Responds to keep NYS DHSES-OEM and other agencies informed of event logistics and the potential need for support.

Maintain Lines of Communication

- ☐ Hold periodic equipment tests/checks for all layers of communication.
- ☐ Consistently scan IT networks that support the communications equipment for potential disruptions.
- ☐ Utilize variable message signs and other equipment to bolster alerting before and during events.
- ☐ Leverage media outlets (e.g., radio, television, social media) to discuss event details and potential concerns (e.g., prohibited items, road and facility closures, etc.).
- ☐ Share periodic public reminders during event (e.g., emergency exits, See Something, Say Something, etc.).

Ingress/Egress/Parking

- ☐ Ensure ingress/egress routes are sufficient to sustain large crowd movements and can be quickly cleared and operationalized; ensure suitable ingress/egress routes for emergency vehicles.
- ☐ Ensure adequate lighting in parking lots and ingress/egress routes.
- ☐ Identify parking lot evacuation routes and have surge parking staff available for various sized events.
- ☐ Identify alternate transportation routes and contingency plans for road closures.
- ☐ Monitor parking lot for overflow/traffic congestion and other potential challenges.
- ☐ Engage local law enforcement on traffic management procedures for various events (e.g., street festivals, parades, road races).
- ☐ Identify specific lanes of travel for protestors to ingress/egress (depending on the nature of the event).
- ☐ Consider cascading effects of traffic ingress and egress at the end of the day or event.

Screening and Security

- ☐ Based on risk assessment determination, conduct security screening for contraband and enforce admission/readmission restrictions (for some there may be little or no screening).
- ☐ Ensure proper equipment is available for screening (e.g., metal detectors, hand-wands, etc.) and appropriate personal protective equipment is in place, if necessary (e.g., disposable gloves)
- ☐ Staff at checkpoints should be trained to recognize contraband, signs should be posted and information shared on social media identifying restricted items before attendees arrive.
- ☐ Enforce credentialing policy and procedures.
- ☐ Consider establishing quadrants or zones (i.e., Outer, Middle and Inner Zone) for security purposes.
- ☐ Conduct routine patrols throughout the event to identify potential vulnerabilities and suspicious activity.
- ☐ Follow up on reported suspicious activities or other incidents.
- ☐ Communicate completion of patrol/security checks to incident command post.
- ☐ Use ATVS and bicycles to effectively maneuver across large distances.

Law Enforcement Operations

- ❑ Staff the appropriate number of officers based on crowd estimates and ensure a mix of uniformed and non-uniformed police officers.
- ❑ Incorporate undercover officers into venue crowds, as necessary, based on intelligence or other threat assessments.
- ❑ Integrate tactical/SWAT teams into the response process, including as part of a Rescue Task Force with Fire and EMS.
- ❑ Consider the requirements to handle a terrorism-related or civil disturbance event and how to integrate with other law enforcement agencies (State Police, FBI, etc.)
- ❑ Employ the use of mounted police, K-9 teams, overwatch teams, SWAT, Bomb Squad/EOD and other law enforcement assets, if necessary, based on the threat environment.
- ❑ Consider the use of auxiliary police, contract security, and volunteers as a force multiplier and potential deterrent.

Fire Rescue/Hazmat Operations

- ❑ Strategically position fire/hazmat personnel and equipment to respond to various incident types throughout the venue.
- ❑ Consider deploying assets that are best suited for the operational environment (e.g., utility task vehicles with firefighting capability, mobile water tankers for events in remote areas, etc.)
- ❑ Assign officers to inspect grounds and facilities before, during, and after the event.
- ❑ Ensure response teams are integrated with law enforcement and EMS, including as part of a Rescue Task Force.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Operations

- ❑ Ensure adequate staffing and available resources based on anticipated crowd size and associated requirements (e.g., NYS Sanitary Code Part 18).
- ❑ Ensure adequate EMS ambulance coverage, particularly for events that may involve patrons with access and functional needs (e.g., elderly) and dependent on weather forecast (e.g., extreme temperatures).
- ❑ Ensure EMS can access entire venue and safely treat/transport individuals.
- ❑ Ensure EMS is integrated into other response team protocols (e.g., Rescue Task Forces).
- ❑ Identify closest medical facilities and their capacity to handle different patient amounts.
- ❑ Brief/train local hospitals and medical facilities on potential evacuation and treatment procedures.
- ❑ Establish first aid stations throughout event venue according to Part 18 Code.
- ❑ Monitor medical treatment locations to identify a medical surge due to a given threat or hazard (heat, food illness, etc.).

Facility Lockdowns and Venue Evacuations

- ❑ Identify and properly mark facilities that can support evacuations or sheltering.
- ❑ Ensure local building owners, businesses are aware of the potential need to shelter people, support evacuations.
- ❑ Ensure necessary staff and the local population are trained in lockdown procedures and *Run, Hide, Fight* tactics.
- ❑ Identify relocation/disruption centers to direct attendees to be transported, evacuated away from venue.
- ❑ Consider phased evacuation procedures.
- ❑ If an incident occurs, quickly establish family assistance and reunification centers (ideally at pre-identified locations).

Emergency Alerting/Public Information

- ❑ During an incident, quickly and appropriately alert staff and patrons to minimize potential panic and chaos.
- ❑ Unify alerting through the command center to prevent redundant or contradictory messaging.
- ❑ Designate a Public Information Officer to coordinate communications with the public, media, and elected officials.
- ❑ Leverage social media to share information, as necessary.

Crowd Control

- ❑ Ensure adequate number of trained crowd control managers are available in accordance with fire/building code requirements.
- ❑ Manage crowd control during normal operations to keep potential evacuation routes/exits open.
- ❑ If an incident occurs, position trained personnel to focus strictly on crowd control/movement away from the incident; ensure personnel are provided with proper equipment, such as flares, flashlights and safety vests so they are highly visible.
- ❑ If applicable, use aerial surveillance (e.g., drones¹) and other technology to enhance crowd monitoring and communications.
- ❑ Post appropriate signage identifying public how to locate security, law enforcement, EMS, and other services.
- ❑ Pre-stage additional barriers in advance of events (such as bike racks prior to concerts) to help manage crowds and maintain egress.
- ❑ Maintain the ability to know how many patrons are at the event at any given time and the event's capacity and overcrowding contingencies.

¹ Be sure to understand and adhere to FAA regulations if using drones for such purposes and note that drones generally cannot be operated directly over people.

Monitor Cyber/Technological Threats

- ☐ Consider having dedicated IT staff within the incident command post to monitor systems (communications, power systems) and to communicate alerts.
- ☐ Ensure backup generation, redundant power/communication systems have been tested and are strategically positioned throughout the event.
- ☐ Activate redundant systems and facilities to keep event running.

POST-EVENT ACTIVITIES

Debriefs

- ☐ Hold thorough post-event debrief/hotwash of notable incidents, identified points of failure/successes.
- ☐ Ensure a wide variety of event management input (i.e., beyond just head of security, EMS, etc.).

Demobilization

- ☐ Properly demobilize event management and security resources; ensure all issued equipment is returned to the appropriate party.
- ☐ Consider a phased demobilization approach (i.e., stagger out the removal of resources).

Review of Medical Incident Response Procedures

- ☐ Integrate medical response review into overall post-event review and/or hold separate, more thorough evaluation.

After-Action Review and Plan Development

- ☐ Following the hotwash, determine if a larger After-Action Review is necessary.
- ☐ Identify optimal After-Action Plan to produce. Ensure that plan will be used for future events and is not just a formality.
- ☐ Implement the recommendations made in the After-Action Review.

Appendix A: Applicable Rules and Regulations

NYS Department of Health – NYS Sanitary Code Part 18:

- ❑ Part 18 sets requirements that public functions expecting to attract more than 5,000 people must comply with.
- ❑ Emergency health care facilities at public functions must comply with minimum equipment requirements.
- ❑ The person holding the public function must obtain a permit issued by the State Commissioner of Health.
- ❑ Additional information is available at:
<https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/ems/part18.htm>

NYS Labor Law Requirement – §475

- ❑ Events attracting more than 5,000 people must comply with Labor Law §475, which includes crowd control measures that must be taken.
- ❑ Additional information is available at:
<https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/publicwork/PWLabLaw.shtm>

International Fire Code - §403.12.2

- ❑ Where the fire code official determines that an indoor or outdoor gathering of persons has an adverse impact on public safety through diminished access to buildings, structures, fire hydrants and fire apparatus access roads or where such gatherings adversely affect public safety services of any kind, the fire code official shall have the authority to order the development of or prescribe a public safety plan that provides an approved level of public safety and addresses the following items:
 1. Emergency vehicle ingress and egress.
 2. Fire protection.
 3. Emergency egress or escape routes.
 4. Emergency medical services.
 5. Public assembly areas.
 6. The directing of both attendees and vehicles, including the parking of vehicles.
 7. Vendor and food concession distribution.
 8. The need for the presence of law enforcement.
 9. The need for fire and emergency medical services personnel.
- ❑ Additional information is available at:
<https://codes.iccsafe.org/public/document/IFC2015/part-ii-general-safety-provisions>

Appendix B: Useful Resources

- ❑ FAA Unmanned Aircraft System Information
<https://www.faa.gov/uas/>
- ❑ US DHS: Security of Soft Targets and Crowded Places Resource Guide
<https://www.dhs.gov/publication/security-soft-targets-and-crowded-places-resource-guide>
- ❑ CNA Institute for Public Research: Managing Large-Scale Security Events: A Planning Primer for Local Law Enforcement Agencies
<https://www.bja.gov/Publications/LSSE-planning-Primer.pdf>
- ❑ FEMA: Special Events Contingency Planning: Job Aids Manual.
<https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/is15aspecialeventsplanning-jamanual.pdf>
- ❑ US DHS: Evacuation Planning Guide for Stadiums
<https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/evacuation-planning-guide-stadiums-508.pdf>
- ❑ US DHS: Active Shooter Preparedness Resources
<https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>
- ❑ NYS DHSES 480 Seconds Active Shooter Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVgXH7smBCK>
- ❑ NFPA 3000: Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER) Program
<https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=3000&tab=research>
- ❑ US DHS: See Something, Say Something Information
<https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-saysomething/campaign-materials>
- ❑ US DHS: Protective Measures Guides
<https://www.dhs.gov/commercial-facilities-publications>
- ❑ DHSES OFPC Crowd Manager Training Information
<http://www.dhses.ny.gov/ofpc/training/crowdmanager.cfm>